

tension, militancy and hostility, and localized eruption is bound to escalate into a wider conflagration. For example, an anti-Armenian clash instigated by any one of the numerous Chechen and foreign Mujahedin detachments currently in Azerbaijan can serve as a spark for this regional eruption. The Azerbaijani forces will be drawn into the conflagration once the Karabakhi forces attempt retaliation or active defense. The Armed Forces of Armenia and the Russian forces deployed in Armenia, will intervene to prevent the collapse of Nagorno-Karabakh. Ultimately, and herein the danger lies, such a war will serve the interests of the Chechen leadership because this war will divert Russian resources from Chechnya and Georgia, where the local Russian forces attempt to block the Chechens' supply lines, to saving the Armenians. Consequently, the Chechen forces will be able to resume their offensive operations against smaller and weaker Russian forces.

Many experts share the apprehension about the Chechen war spreading to the Armenia-Azerbaijan region. In her recent "Open Letter to the Armenian People," Baroness Cox, the Deputy Speaker of the House of Lords, elucidated the mounting threat to Armenia. "A decade after regaining its independence, Armenia might be in such great danger that its independence and very existence may be threatened. The hope created by negotiations with Azerbaijan currently being pursued by the Armenian government is deceptive. The Islamist forces in the Caucasus are determined decisively to 'resolve' the 'problems' of Armenia and Karabakh by force. Nobody, least of all Azerbaijan and Turkey, will stand in their way," Baroness Cox rightly stressed that the situation in the Caucasus is far from having been already decided. "My aim is not to sow despair," she wrote. "On the contrary, I firmly believe that an independent Armenia and Artsakh are destined to flourish and to emerge as bulwarks of stability and prosperity in the Caucasus. However, this destiny will not be achieved, and the worst will happen, if the current political dynamics are allowed to continue." I share both the apprehension and hope expressed by Baroness Cox.

Indeed, the main challenge facing us is to prevent this scenario from materializing. Widespread hostilities have not yet begun. However, with intentions and preferences clearly declared, all sides are now posturing—trying to read the situation in order to make their fateful decisions about escalating and expanding the fighting. Therefore, it is high time to take preventive steps in order to contain and stifle the brewing crisis. The American policy toward Nagorno-Karabakh, because of the important Armenian community in the US, is looked upon by all the regional powers as a test case and a measure of the West's resolve to save what is both a cradle of Judeo-Christian civilization and a contemporary strategic asset in a crucial though most volatile region.

Ultimately, the fate of the Caucasus will be determined by the resistance, defiance, resolve and bravery of the local people. The proud ancient peoples who have retained their heritage and religion through centuries of Islamic onslaught and pressure will not surrender now. The Armenians' defense of their homes and heritage against overwhelming odds—as they have done for centuries—is indeed a cornerstone of the retention of Western presence and interests in the Caucasus.

However, the Armenians may succumb to an Islamist onslaught. Such a development will be detrimental to the US national interest in the Caucasus.

Therefore, the United States should live up to the challenge and make a concentrated effort to prevent the war in Chechnya from spreading and escalating to the point of endangering the regional stability, let alone the very existence of the Armenians. Our own vital interests are served by these undertakings. Hence, striving to retain access to the energy resources of the Caspian Sea Basin and Central Asia—the Persian Gulf of the 21st Century—the United States must both buttress the Armenians' ability to withstand the building pressure, prevail in the trials ahead, and ultimately project stability into this strategically and economically crucial region; as well as support the Russian endeavor to contain the Islamist upsurge in the Caucasus before terrorism gets out of control.

TAIWANESE AMERICAN HERITAGE WEEK 2000

HON. BOB SCHAFFER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 4, 2000

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, this month I join people throughout Colorado and across the nation in celebrating Pacific American Heritage Month. The Pacific American community represents an important foundation of America's future and I commend their proud celebration of heritage and community.

Taiwanese American Heritage Week—held from May 7 to May 14—celebrates the unique and diverse contributions of the more than 500,000 Taiwanese Americans in the United States. This portion of the population has made countless significant achievements in this country and their accomplishments can be found in every facet of American life. For instance, Taiwanese Americans have succeeded as successful and notable artists, Nobel Laureate scientists, researchers, human rights activists, and business leaders.

In addition to recognizing these contributions, this is an excellent opportunity to celebrate the success of democracy on the island of Taiwan. Since 1987, the Taiwanese people have possessed the rights to select their own leaders, practice the religion of their choice, and express their thoughts openly and freely. Taiwan is a vibrant and democratic participant in the family of nations. The election last March of opposition leader Mr. Chen Shui-bian as the new president, and my friend Ms. Annette Lu as the new vice-president of Taiwan, should be considered the crowning achievement of this drive by the people of Taiwan toward full-fledged democracy and freedom.

While Taiwan has established a model democracy, there remain political challenges. Gaining worldwide recognition of the legitimacy of Taiwan's government is paramount. With all that Taiwanese and Taiwanese-Americans have accomplished, there can be no complete satisfaction until Taiwan's status and global contributions are respected and appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, Taiwanese American Heritage Week recognizes the long-standing friendship between the United States and Taiwan. I com-

mend the great accomplishments and contributions of the Taiwanese American community.

WE THE PEOPLE . . . THE CITIZEN AND THE CONSTITUTION

HON. DON YOUNG

OF ALASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 4, 2000

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, on May 6–8, 2000, more than 1,200 students from across the United States will be in Washington, DC, to compete in this national finals of the We the People . . . The Citizen and the Constitution program. I am proud to announce that the class from West Anchorage High School from Anchorage will represent the state of Alaska in this national event. These young scholars have worked diligently to reach the national finals and through their experience have gained a deep knowledge and understanding of the fundamental principles and values of our constitutional democracy.

The names of the students are Brandi Backus, Jennifer Chen, Kaithyn Clark, Karen Elano, Meghan Holtan, Marissa Johannes, Alyson Merrill, Colin Moran, Stephanie Painter, Brandon Reiley, Neeraj Satyal, Isaac Schapira, Nathan Senner, Stephanie Shanklin, Eric Sjoden, David Street, Ryan Tans, Carisa Verdola, Robby Wayerski.

I would also like to recognize their teacher, Richard Goldstein, who deserves much of the credit for the success of the class.

The We the People . . . The Citizen and the Constitution program is the most extensive educational program in the country developed specifically to educate young people about the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The three-day national competition is modeled after hearings in the United States Congress. These hearings consist of oral presentations by high school students before a panel of adult judges. The students testify as constitutional experts before a panel of judges representing various regions of the country and a variety of appropriate professional fields. The students' testimony is followed by a period of questioning by the simulated congressional committee. The judges probe students for their depth of understanding and ability to apply their constitutional knowledge. Columnist David Broder described the national finals as "the place to have your faith in the younger generation restored."

Administered by the Center for Civic Education, the We the People . . . program has provided curricular materials at upper elementary, middle, and high school levels for more than 26.5 million students nationwide. The program provides students with a working knowledge of our Constitution, Bill of Rights, and the principles of a democratic government. Members of Congress and their staff enhance the program by discussing current constitutional issues with the students and teachers and by participating in other educational activities.

The class from West Anchorage High School is currently conducting research and preparing for the upcoming national competition in Washington, DC. I wish these young "constitutional experts" the best of luck at the We the People . . . national finals and my staff